



E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

The Whittier Sewer Project

The Promise and Perils of Collaboration

TEACHING NOTE

The Whittier Sewer Project is a four-phase case study designed for students to understand the contingencies and critical questions for considering, organizing, and conducting a stakeholder collaboration and then implementing the resulting agreement. The integration of text and video segments from the stakeholders heightens student learning about collaboration in the public sector.

Case Summary

This case is the story of how a diverse group of stakeholders, including a North Carolina county government, a sovereign Indian nation, a church, and a regional water authority, came together to address a significant community need. It covers the relevant events from 2000-2015 using the four-phase collaborative case study teaching model of Morse and Stephens (2012).

Finding and investing resources for a generally low-income area is a particular challenge for infrastructure development. The case shows the value of creative, and persistent, work by stakeholders to combine financial resources, as well as expertise and management, to make the project work.

One of the educative points is examining the challenge of moving from phase 3, reaching agreements on taking initial action, to phase 4, implementation and institutionalizing collaboration. The case addresses the iterative work for collaboration and involves re-visiting agreements as circumstances change.

This case was written by Ricardo S. Morse and John B. Stephens University of North Carolina School of Government. It was one of the winners in E-PARCC's 2016-2017 Competition for Collaborative Public Management, Governance, and Problem-Solving Teaching Materials. The case is intended for classroom discussion and not to suggest either effective or ineffective responses to the situation depicted. It may be copied as many times as needed, provided that the authors and E-PARCC are given full credit. E-PARCC is a project of the Collaborative Governance Initiative, Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration- a research, teaching and practice center within Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/parcc_eparcc.aspx

Using the Case

The case highlights contingency in collaborative efforts. The phases allow for step-by-step analysis and discussion of the effort, with students engaging on the factors favorable and unfavorable for collaboration to succeed. Like peeling an onion, controlling the information flow about the case across the phases focuses attention on uncertainties and different interpretations for anticipating what comes next.

The case is in the minority of not showing a “clear success” of collaboration. We believe this helps students compare and contrast other cases and analytical frameworks to guide research and practice on public sector collaboration

This case is best used for Master’s level students in Public Administration, Economic Development, and Environmental Management programs. The case is also appropriate for executive professional education, since public administrators (government, nonprofit and other) are likely to recognize the contingencies of collaborative stakeholder work and would benefit from the four-phase analytical framework.

Additional case information for the instructor

Most teaching case studies of public sector collaboration are presented in full and provide one set of discussion questions at the end. This form of case can limit students’ learning about the key choices during the collaboration and the contingencies which affect the relative success of the effort.

Because the case is not a clear success, the path of collaborative work, decisions, and changing circumstances helps students compare and contrast other cases and analytical frameworks to guide research and practice on public sector collaboration

We offer three contextual factors for how this case can fit with pedagogical goals on public sector collaboration as well as contrasting case studies of the traditional format.

- Kind(s) of network or collaborative group (Milward and Provan, 2006; Popp, et. al., 2014)
- Linking skills to phases in a collaborative process (Morse and Stephens, 2012)
- Leadership practices (several sources, per below)

Video Clips of the Stakeholders (Phases 1-3, 2008)

During the first three phases of the process (as presented in the case) - videos of stakeholders amplify the text and helps frame discussion questions for phases 1, 2 and 3 (see outline below).

Student Learning Objectives

- Articulate the phases of a collaborative effort
- Practice stakeholder identification and consider possible stakeholders not involved in the collaboration
- Examine roles of facilitation and leadership in different phases and across the full collaboration effort
- Relate economic and political changes to the goals and resources of the collaboration
- Evaluate stakeholder behaviors which supported and which did not support the collaboration
- Identify factors for incomplete or lack of success in this case.

Sample List of Appropriate Readings

Agranoff, Robert. *Collaborating to Manage: A Primer for the Public Sector*. Georgetown University Press, 2012.

Bryson, John M., Barbara C. Crosby, and Melissa Middleton Stone. "The design and implementation of cross-sector collaborations: Propositions from the literature." *Public Administration Review* 66, no. s1 (2006): 44-55.

Bryson, John M., Barbara C. Crosby, and Melissa Middleton Stone. "Designing and implementing cross-sector collaborations: Needed and challenging." *Public Administration Review* 75, no. 5 (2015): 647-663.

Carlson, Chris. "Convening." In *The Consensus Building Handbook. A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement* (1999): 169-198.

Carlson, Christine. *A Practical Guide to Collaborative Governance*. Policy Consensus Initiative, 2007.

Crosby, Barbara C., and John M. Bryson. "Public integrative leadership." *The Oxford handbook of leadership and organizations* (2014): 57-72.

Emerson, Kirk, and Tina Nabatchi. *Collaborative Governance Regimes*. Georgetown University Press, 2015.

Huxham, Chris, and Siv Vangen. *Managing to Collaborate: The Theory and Practice of Collaborative Advantage*. Routledge, 2005.

Kaner, Sam. *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-making* (3rd ed). John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

Luke, Jeffery S., and Jeffrey Scott Luke. *Catalytic leadership*. Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Milward, H. Brinton, and Keith G. Provan. *A Manager's Guide to Choosing and Using Collaborative Networks*. Washington, DC: IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2006.

Morse, Ricardo S. "Bill Gibson and the art of leading across boundaries." *Public Administration Review* 70, no. 3 (2010): 434-442.

Morse, Ricardo S., and John B. Stephens. "Teaching collaborative governance: Phases, competencies, and case-based learning." *Journal of Public Affairs Education* (2012): 565-583.

O'Leary, Rosemary, and Catherine Gerard. *Collaboration Across Boundaries: Insights and Tips from Federal Senior Executives*. Washington, DC: IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2012.

O'Leary, Rosemary, and Nidhi Vij. "Collaborative public management: Where have we been and where are we going?" *American Review of Public Administration* 42, no. 5 (2012): 507-522.

Popp, Janice, Gail Louise MacKean, Ann Casebeer, H. Brinton Milward, and Ronald Raymond Lindstrom. *Inter-organizational Networks: A Critical Review of the Literature to Inform Practice*. Washington, DC: IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2014.

Potapchuk, William R., and Jarle Crocker. "Implementing consensus-based agreements." In *The Consensus Building Handbook. A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement* (1999): 527-556.

Straus, David. "Designing a consensus building process using a graphic road map." In *The Consensus Building Handbook. A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement* (1999): 137-168.

Williams, Paul. *Collaboration in Public Policy and Practice: Perspectives on Boundary Spanners*. Policy Press, 2012.

Whittier Case as Presented in Phases

Phase 1: Assessment

Possible reading assignments:

- Carlson (2007)
- Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2006 & 2015)
- Emerson & Nabatchi - Chapter 2 (2105)
- Luke - Chapter 3 (1997)

Discussion questions:

1. What are the interests of various stakeholders?
2. What other stakeholders (not identified above) might also be relevant?
3. If you are Bill Gibson, what would be your first steps?
4. What preconditions for collaboration seem to be in place? What more would you want to know in order to feel confident that the opportunity for collaboration is ripe?

Phase 2: Initiation

Possible reading assignments:

- Carlson (1999)
- Straus (1999)
- Emerson & Nabatchi - Chapter 2 (2105)
- Luke - Chapter 4 (1997)

Discussion questions:

1. How was the issue (or problem) initially framed? How might that have helped the stakeholders come to the table?
2. How was the group initially organized? What are alternatives to this arrangement?
3. What stakeholders were not at the table in these early stages of the process? What difference might it make to have other stakeholders at the table in this phase?

Phase 3: Deliberation

Possible reading assignments:

- Luke - Chapter 5 (1997)
- Kaner (2014)

Discussion questions:

1. How did the partnership make decisions as new information and new problems emerged?
2. What are the pros and cons of so much of the project hinging on stakeholder's trust in Bill Gibson, the facilitator and informal leader of the working group?
3. Were some participants "more invested" in the work than others? Or is the division of labor by expertise, time or other factors appropriate?
4. Are the changes or adjustments to the original plan a normal part of nailing down decisions and plans, or is there some bigger concern?

Phase 4: Implementation

Possible reading assignments:

- Potapchuk & Crocker (1999)
- Luke - Chapter 6 (1997)
- Agranoff (2012)
- Milward & Provan (2006)
- Popp et al. (2014)

Discussion questions:

1. If you were Bill Gibson, what would you do now, as an informal consultant/facilitator, step by step?
2. What are the factors which support a revitalization of the collaboration? What are the factors which make a revitalization effort difficult? How did the partnership make decisions as new information and new problems emerged?
3. What is the relationship between WSD and TWSA?
4. What is the role of the EBCI?

5. Mandatory hook-up seems to be a missed opportunity. Why would the stakeholders be concerned about mandating hook-ups?
6. Are some participants “more invested” in the work than others? Or is the division of labor by expertise, time or other factors appropriate?
7. What could the partnership have done differently during earlier phases to have a better chance of succeeding through implementation?

Other contextual factors for public sector collaboration

- Linking skills to phases in a collaborative process (see table, next page)
- Kind of network or collaborative group
 - Milward and Provan (2006)
 - Popp, et. al. (2014)
- Leadership practices (Bill Gibson as boundary spanning, integrative leader)
 - Morse (2010)
 - Williams (2012)
 - O’Leary & Bingham (2012)

Linking Skills to Phases in a Collaborative Process

Possible Handout - Activities and Skills by Phase (from Morse & Stephens, 2012)

Assessment	Initiation	Deliberation	Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Issue analysis · Environmental assessment · Stakeholder identification · Strategic thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stakeholder engagement · Political/community organizing · Building social capital · Process design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Group facilitation · Team building and group dynamics · Listening · Consensus building · Interest-based negotiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Developing action plans · Designing governance structures · Public engagement · Network management · Conflict resolution · Performance evaluation
Meta-Competencies			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Collaborative mind-set · Passion for creating public value · Systems thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Openness and risk taking · Sense of mutuality and connectedness · Humility or measured ego 	

Collaborative Competencies—Themes from the Literature, Morse and Stephens (2012)

Suggested Use of the Case

The case design is for students to engage on discussion questions at the end of each phase. Controlling the intake of case information (i.e., students “not reading ahead”) is important. Readings can be assigned to all students or to students aligned with the particular phase under consideration (as outlined above). The video segments are best used as part of phases 1, 2 and 3.

A four-class session design

First class: Students are assigned the case through Phase 1, Assessment. Other assigned reading can integrate concepts of identifying stakeholders, issues, forums, kinds of power/resources of stakeholders, and pros and cons of different assessors/initiators of a process. Instructor may also compare Phase 1 of this case to similar material from one or more previous cases in the course.

During the class, discussion can be punctuated with one- to two-minute segments from a 12-minute video with interviews of most of the key stakeholders referenced in the case. See below for video segments to accompany the four phases of the case study.

Possible Video segments (details below): **1, 2 and 3**. Lead discussion, per questions at the end of Phase 1.

Second class: Students are assigned the case through Phase 2.

Possible Video segments (details below): **2, 3 and 4**. Note: How were student insights or uncertainties about phase 1 addressed (if at all) in phase 2?

Third class: Students are assigned the case through Phase 3.

Possible Video segments (details below): **4 through 7**. Note: How were student insights or uncertainties about phases 1 and 2 addressed (if at all) in phase 3?

Fourth class: Students are assigned the case through Phase 4.

Possible Video segments (details below): **8**.

A two-class session design

Class 1: Prior to the class session, divide students into two groups for reading assignments:

1. One group reads the case through Phase 1: Assessment.
2. The other group reads Phase 1 and 2, (up through Initiation). Reading is completed prior to class.

Instructor leads class discussion.

1. Focus on case up through Phase 1: Assessment. The group of students who only read Phase 1 are the primary participants. Other group of students pay attention to answers, factors or questions from the Phase 1 students.
2. Discussion continues on Phase 2, Initiation. Second group of students are the primary participants.
 - a. Ask a Phase 2 student to summarize what happened in phase 2. Phase 1 students ask for clarification or details.
 - b. Full class examines how initiation happened, choices on participations and designing the collaboration. Instructor highlights links to other cases or frameworks of collaboration.

Class 2: Prior to the class session, divide students into two groups:

1. One group reads the case through Phase 3: Deliberation.
2. The other group reads Phase 4, implementation. Reading is completed prior to class.
Suggestion: teacher “switches student groups,” such that “Phase 1 only” group of students are assigned reading through Phase 4, Implementation.

Instructor leads class discussion, similar to Class 1, per above.

Discussion Question: In addition to the questions at the end of each phase:

- Could the stakeholders have ended the collaboration, essentially pulled the plug?
- What would that mean for the stakeholders?

Video Segments

The following shows how to access the video and topics for certain segments to use in-class as part of discussion. The video, produced in 2008, can be found on the School of Government YouTube site at <https://youtu.be/lp8dGrlR4O0>

Segment Topics, Time Marks [when to start/stop] and Length

Overall video: 12 minutes and 17 seconds

Segment 1: Introduction of stakeholders: How they see the situation

Length: 1 minute 36 seconds [Start - 0:50 End - 2:26]

Speakers:

- Bill Gibson - Executive Director, Southwest Commission

- Michell Hicks - Principal Chief, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Larry Blythe, Vice-Chief, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Sue Nations - Former Superintendent, Jackson County Schools
- Ned Pressly - Pastor, Whittier Church of God

Segment 2: Is there a unifying interest?

Length: 34 seconds [Start - 2:26 End - 3:10]

Speaker: Bill Gibson - Executive Director, Southwest Commission

Segment 3: Conflict, commitment and leadership

Length: 1 minute 25 seconds [Start - 3:10 End - 4:35]

Speakers:

- Joe Cline - Director, Tuckaseegee Water and Sewer Authority
- Brian Thomas McMahan - former chairman, Jackson County Commissioners

Segment 4: A trusted facilitator - Bill Gibson and the Southwest Commission

Length: 1 minute 25 seconds [Start - 3:10 End - 4:35]

Speakers:

- Joe Cline - Director, Tuckaseegee Water and Sewer Authority
- Brian Thomas McMahan - former chairman, Jackson County Commissioners

Segment 5: Stakeholders making commitments: Money

Length: 1 minute 25 seconds [Start - 5:33 End - 7:00]

Speaker: Bill Gibson - Executive Director, Southwest Commission

Text: SWC - \$3 million grant funding and helped others come together with their funds

Segment 6: Problems encountered on money; New choices

Length: 1 minute 20 seconds [Start - 7:00 End - 8:20]

Speaker - Bill Gibson - Executive Director, Southwest Commission

Ends with rolling text - summarizing Gibson's information about stakeholders' additional financial commitments and other information

Segment 7: Public value created

Length: 1 minute 3 seconds [Start - 8:39 End - 9:42]

Speakers:

- Sue Nations - Former Superintendent, Jackson County Schools
- Brian Thomas McMahan - former chairman, Jackson County Commissioners
- Larry Blythe, Vice-Chief, Eastern Bank of Cherokee Indians

Segment 8: Leadership lessons

Length: 2 minutes 1 second [Start - 9:43 End - 11:44]

Speakers:

- Joe Cline - Director, Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority
- Larry Blythe, Vice-Chief, Eastern Bank of Cherokee Indians
- Sue Nations - Former Superintendent, Jackson County Schools